

Colossians Lesson 1

Colossians Chapter 1

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Memory verses for this week: *Gal 1:6 I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:
Gal 1:7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

Introduction: We begin a new study this week on the book of Colossians. The four Prison Epistles of Paul, which include the Epistle to the Colossians, have been called the anatomy of the Church because their subjects cover all aspects of the Christian faith. In Colossians our attention is directed to the head of the body who is of course Jesus Christ. The body, the church, is secondary. Christ is the theme of this chapter, and Christian living is centered in Him. We will be covering three important doctrines in this chapter: The doctrine of thanksgiving, the doctrine of the person of Christ, and the doctrine of Christ.

The epistle to the Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul. It is thought to have been penned during his initial imprisonment at Rome along with his epistles to the Ephesians and Philemon. It likely was written in about A.D. 64. Colosse was a town in the province of Asia not distant from Laodicea. There is no record that Paul had ever been there.

Epaphras clearly was a leader in the church and may have been the one who started the work there. In Philemon 23, Paul indicated that Epaphras was a fellow prisoner with him at Rome. From him, Paul undoubtedly learned of the state of affairs of the church at Colosse. The epistle is similar in development to that of Ephesians and some consider it to be a condensed form of it. .

I. The Introduction

Col 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother,

Col 1:2 To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul begins by announcing his authorship as “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” In the broader context of the New Testament, an apostle was one who had not only witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but also had been directly sent forth by Him. Paul notes this in that he was an apostle “by the will of God.” Paul also mentions the presence of Timothy as a brother. He evidently was present with Paul at Rome. He may or may not have been detained.

The epistle is addressed to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse. The word translated as saints ('agiov hagios) literally means 'holy ones.' It, of course, refers to those who by virtue of faith in Christ have been sanctified and made holy before God by their standing in Christ. It is a practical synonym for those who are saved.

Paul takes his greeting a step further. He particularly addressed the epistle to those who were "faithful brethren in Christ." Many are saved. Few are truly faithful brethren. As is the case in so many of Paul's epistles, he invoked, Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Though often glossed over, the injunction of grace and peace from God to us is profound. Grace in the New Testament is a broad concept. In this case, it is 'unmerited favor.' Grace in its broader scope conveys a spectrum of thought ranging from kindness (i.e., graciousness) to strength and help.

Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

Heb 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Heb 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Paul invokes that grace to his readers. Indeed, we all need the strength, help, and kindness of God which only comes through His grace. We have been saved by God's grace (His unmerited favor). However, once on the pathway of the Christian life, we need grace on an ongoing basis for strength for the journey. Its companion, peace, likewise is often taken for granted.

Problems, anxieties, and troubles line the road of the Christian life. However, the God of all peace offers His peace to His people. That peace of God is the forerunner to happiness. Without peace, there is not only trouble, but a lack of true happiness. Such fulfillment comes from the peace of God.

Col 1:3 We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Col 1:4 Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints,

Col 1:5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

Paul was a man who remembered others in prayer, and he tells them that he gave thanks to God for those who were faithful there in the church in Colosse. It is wonderful when our love is known towards other saints. Oh that all churches might be known for lifting up the name of Jesus Christ and showing love one to another. These had a hope like all of us who look for the soon appearing of Jesus Christ.

1 Th 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

1 Th 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

1 Th 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1 Th 4:17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Th 4:18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Paul commences a lengthy sentence of greeting which extends through verse 8. He begins by noting his thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. Though Paul had evidently never met the Colossian Christians (2:1); he thanked God for them, praying always for them. Insight into spiritual maturity is revealed. Paul prayed always for these who were young as Christians and young as a church. Of note is the word translated as always (pantote pantote). It literally has the sense, 'at all times.' Paul prayed for these young saints he had never even met every chance he had.

In verse 4, Paul notes that they (he and Timothy) had heard of the Colossians' faith in Christ Jesus and their love to all saints. Faith always has an object. The only correct object thereof is Jesus Christ. The modern power-of-positive-thinking philosophy—the faith-in-faith concept—is as empty as it is unscriptural.

These Colossian Christians also had developed a reputation of having love for other brethren. Throughout the New Testament, an injunction to love one another is repeated—first by our Lord, then by His apostles. Paul complimented the Colossian church for their love for others. That report had reached all the way to Paul at Rome, no doubt by word from Epaphras.

Paul here shifts the object of his thanks from the personal to that of the heavenlies in verse 5. He was thankful on a broader scope for the hope "which is laid up for you in heaven." The concept of hope is 'a positive looking forward to that which lies ahead.' We, as they, have a wonderful 'hope' laid up for us in heaven. It is something all Christian people can look forward to throughout their journey of the Christian life.

Though the path now often is not easy, there is a great hope of that which lies ahead in heaven for us. He goes on to note in the latter portion of the verse that they had heard before the word of the truth of the gospel. Though obvious, the Apostle makes note of the “truth of the gospel.” The key thought is truth. Yet at the same time, the truth sprang forth from the gospel.

Col 1:6 Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:

Col 1:7 As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ;

Through obedience to Christ’s command as well as providential events, the gospel quickly was spreading across the world of that day. It had brought forth fruit through them in Colosse as well as across the world. Implied is the idea of seed which when planted will in due season bring forth fruit. The Colossian church was a graphic example thereof. When those of Colosse heard that seed of truth and “knew the grace of God in truth,” it in due season brought forth fruit in them. They were born again. They had become fruit unto God.

The first mention of Epaphras is noted. It evidently was through his agency that the Colossians had first heard the gospel. In the context of the gospel and the grace of God, Paul indicates that they had learned of them by Epaphras. He had brought the gospel to Colosse. Paul describes him as “our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ.”

Through circumstances not noted, Epaphras had come to Rome and apparently was a fellow prisoner in house arrest with Paul as recorded in Philemon 23. There is an illustration here of the providential working of God. He may have drawn Epaphras to Rome for the express purpose that Paul would become aware of the Colossian church. That would bring about Paul’s epistle to them for their encouragement and strength. It also became the means whereby Scripture was completed.

Col 1:8 Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit.

Paul learned of the love this young church had in the Holy Spirit.

When the truth of the Gospel is preached, it brings forth fruits. And that is more than just the saved souls of those who turn to the Christ, but our lives have spiritual fruit that builds up and exhorts the church. Paul speaks of Epaphras as the one who had taught them about the Grace of God, and he is the one who has communicated their love to Paul as he is here in the Roman prison. Epaphras was a special man to Paul, as he had been converted to Christianity by Paul while preaching in Ephesus.

The KJV Study Bible said this about fruit bearing:

Which is come unto you. Present with you. **In all the world.** The gospel was spreading all over the Roman Empire. **Bringeth forth fruit.** Is bearing fruit, keeps on bearing fruit. The gospel is dynamic, and this speaks of its inner energy and transforming power. It is folly to look for fruit before there is life. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Mt 7:20). **Increasing.** Growing and fruit-bearing are simultaneous. There is inward growth and outward expression. The outward extension of the gospel never stops. We read in John 12:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The church must germinate or terminate; it will either evangelize or fossilize. **Since the day ye heard.** This fruit-bearing and growing began and it continues. **Knew the grace of God in truth.** The grace of God was fully apprehended and should have made them immune from Gnosticism.

II. Paul's Prayer for these Christians

Col 1:9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Col 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

The Apostle here makes mention of his prayer for the Colossian church. It indeed is rich not only in content, but also the example of mature prayer. In recalling the first day that they (he and Timothy) had heard of the love of the Spirit in the Colossian church, they had ceased not to pray for them.

Again, an example of intercessory as well as continuing prayer is presented. The essence of such prayer included their desire that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his will." The word translated as knowledge (epignwsiv epignosis) has the nuance of 'precise or accurate knowledge.' In this case, it is of God's will. Paul's prayer was that they would precisely understand God's will with complete wisdom and spiritual understanding.

We need the precise knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. We ought to pray the same for others, particularly those young in the Lord. Such precise understanding of God's will was that they "might walk worthy of the Lord." Our understanding of God's overall will, particularly as recorded in His Word, enables us to walk worthy of Him.

The word translated as worthy (axiwv axios) has among other things the sense of 'suitably' or 'appropriately.' Proper understanding of God's will and Word will enable us to walk appropriately before Him. Specifically, that includes being

pleasing unto all. The idea is not of trying to please people per se, but rather of living a life which is honest, just, and gracious, which indeed is pleasing to others.

Paul prayed that they might be “fruitful in every good work.” Indeed, being fruitful in every good work is part of walking worthy of the Lord. It certainly is something any servant of God needs to this day and is something for which to pray about concerning others. Paul prayed additionally that they might be “increasing in the knowledge of God.” That truth remains not only for them, but also us to this day.

It is important to look at some of the things Paul prays for in regards to those in the church. He first prays that they will be filled with the knowledge of HIS will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. That is so important that we do what God desires of us, not necessarily what we would like to do.

1 Timothy 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. 8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

And my favorite verse in the Bible: 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Another thing he prays is that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing and that they might be fruitful in every good work. And he prays that they might increase in their knowledge of God. The more we understand God, the less the pressures and trials of this life affect us. I’m not saying we become immune to trouble, but as we begin to understand God and know that nothing happens to us without his knowledge, we begin to realize that even the tough times have a reason. Paul had learned this. That is why he could say in our study of Philippians that he could be happy in whatever state he was in. The Psalmist speaks so many times of the majesty and knowledge of God. The knowledge of God is so wonderful... who can know it?

Rom 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Rom 11:34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

Rom 11:35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

Rom 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Col 1:11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

Col 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

The prayer of the Apostle continues as begun in verse 9. His thought is that the Colossian Christians might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power. The word translated as strengthened (dunamow dunamoo) derives from (dunamiv) dunamis, the more basic New Testament word for 'power.' The former is the verb, the latter the noun. The word as might is (dunamiv) dunamis.

The greater thought is that Paul prayed they might be empowered with all power by God's glorious strength and power. A solid foundation is established for praying for spiritual power. However, notice the desired goal of such spiritual power: Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. Three major qualities of spiritual maturity are here noted. The word translated as patience ('upomoh hupomone) bespeaks patience in the sense of 'endurance' and 'perseverance.'

The word translated as longsuffering (makroyumia makrothumia) has the sense of 'forbearance' or 'slowness in avenging wrongs.' The former speaks of perseverance in the face of difficulties. The latter bespeaks having grace in putting up with difficult people.

The third word, joyfulness, completes the thought of being joyful even in the midst of problem situations or problem people. Great spiritual maturity is noted, implying discipline of purpose, emotion, and spirit.

Paul continued the record of his prayer in verse 12: Giving thanks unto the Father. Whether this is part of what he prayed they would do or if it was part of his own gratefulness to God is not clear. The ambiguity, however, goes both ways. Indeed, they and we ought to give thanks to God. And, Paul no doubt did the same. Thanksgiving certainly completes the spiritual injunctions enjoined in the preceding verse. One reason for such thanksgiving to God is that He hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The idea is that God has enabled us to have a part of His inheritance in His light along with other of God's people.

There no doubt is both spiritual and prophetic implications thereto. We have even now partaken of the inheritance of light in our salvation. The full reception of that

inheritance will come later in glory. Hence, the requisite reaction is thanksgiving to God.

Paul also prays that they might be strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power. If we want power, we need to look to God. In our own strength, we can do little. But when we work out of the true vine as a branch, there is virtually no limit to what we may be able to accomplish.

We should forever give praise to the Father for allowing us to be sons of God.. we are joint heirs with the Son and have an inheritance of the saints in light.

Rom 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Rom 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Rom 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Rom 8:17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Col 1:13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

Col 1:14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

The Lord has delivered us from the power of darkness. Not only have we received an inheritance in His light, He, in so doing, has delivered us from the very power of darkness. That of course is the power of Satan and sin. God has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. The word rendered as translated (meyisthmi methistemi) has the sense of being 'transferred' or 'placed.' In this case, we have been placed into the kingdom of His dear Son. Though the kingdom of God is yet to come, we meanwhile have been made citizens thereof through His dear Son.

In His dear Son, we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Here, the greater truth of redemption is touched upon. It is the purchase of one out of bondage unto liberty. Here the purchase price (the ransom) is made clear. It is His blood.

1Pe 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

1Pe 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Our redemption from the curse and bondage of sin has been predicated upon the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, His shed blood has formed the basis of “the forgiveness of sins.” Though the world will often readily admit that God can and will forgive sin, they routinely ignore how such forgiveness is predicated upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

It is God who delivered us from the power of darkness.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Man in his natural physical condition does not want to be in the light, but loves the darkness. Only Jesus can bring us into the light.

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Only God can translate us into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. This happens the day we are saved and turn to Christ for Salvation. In verse 13 the tense of the verb is past tense when it says that God “hath” translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. Every person who is saved has found their redemption in one and one only... and that is Jesus Christ. By his blood our sins are forgiven, by his stripes we are healed.

Hebrews 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Isa 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

Isa 53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isa 53:7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Isa 53:8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

Isa 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Isa 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

III. The Doctrine of Christ's Person

Col 1:15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

The Apostle continues his exaltation of Jesus Christ. Here He is noted as the image of the invisible God. The word translated as image (eikwn eikon) has the sense of a 'likeness,' or 'representation,' or 'manifestation.' Though God the Father indeed is invisible, in Jesus Christ there was a very visible representation of the Father.

Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The incarnation of Christ is clearly in view. Paul also writes by way of apposition that Jesus Christ is the firstborn of every creature. The phrase does not refer to the origin of the eternal Christ. Rather, it hearkens back to the origin of every creature. All creatures have their origin in Christ. The following context makes this very point unmistakably clear.

The word translated as firstborn (prwtotokov protokos) literally means 'first begotten.' The sense here, however, clearly has to do with origin of every creature and not the origin of Christ. Paul flatly states that Jesus Christ was the Creator

there in verse 16. This does not contradict Genesis 1:1. Rather, it complements it.

The personality within the Godhead, chosen and delegated by the Father to do the actual creating, was none other than the Son. See John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:2. "For by him were all things created."

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

The Apostle proceeds to note four contrasting couplets encompassing the universality of creation by Jesus Christ. What seems apparent is the dichotomy between the obvious physical creation and the less obvious spiritual world. The point remains, Jesus Christ created it all.

First, there are all "that are in heaven, and that are in earth." Not only is He the origin of all that are on this earth, but all that are in heaven. Implied is the heavenly race of angelic creatures, both holy and fallen. He has created all that are "visible and invisible." His physical creation is apparent. However, He likewise created the spiritual world which we will someday better understand.

Finally, he indicates "principalities, or powers." The former lends itself to human authority whilst the latter to spirit- world authority. The word translated as powers {exousia excousia} has more of a sense of authority than of might. He summarizes it all with the encompassing declaration: "all things were created by him, and for him." Further insight is noted. Not only were all things created by Him, but they were in fact created for Him. Hence, He not only is our Creator, but our Lord.

Rev 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

There is no greater than God... He is eternal. He was before all others and rules the universe. We know that everything exists because God created it. The word firstborn does not mean that Jesus was the first one created. Jesus was with God in the beginning and has an eternal existence. It simply means that he was before all creatures. It means He is greater than all and has sovereignty

over all the creation.

Job 38:4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding.

Job 38:5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

Job 38:6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof;

Job 38:7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Two other indications of the Deity of Christ are set forth here in verse 17. And he is before all things. (His eternality is clearly in view.) The thought simply is that before anything was, He was. He is the eternal predecessor of all. He always has been. By him all things consist. The latter (consist) is translated from (sunistaw) sunistao. It has the sense of being 'banded' or 'combined together.'

Implied is how the universe in its entirety holds its stability, order, and even integrity in Christ. Whether it is the macro-order of planetary orbits or the micro-order of the nuclear binding force of the atom, Jesus Christ is the glue which holds the universe together. The author of Hebrews recorded how that He upholds "all things by the word of his power".

Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

Heb 1:2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Col 1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

The focus shifts from the physical to the spiritual. And he is the head of the body, the church. The church is summarily noted as the body, that is, the body of Christ. Jesus is its head. Moreover, He also is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead. The word translated as beginning (arch arche) again has the sense of

'origin.' The reference to the "firstborn from the dead" points clearly to His resurrection. He indeed has "become the firstfruits of them that slept" (I Corinthians 15:20).

1Co 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

Jesus Christ is not only the Creator, He also is the originator of the resurrection. The final result in all things he might have the preeminence. The word preeminence is of interest. It is translated from a word (prwteuw proteuo) which has the idea of being 'first' or being in 'first place.' The greater thought is that in all things, Jesus Christ might have first place. He indeed is number one. In Jesus Christ all fullness of Deity dwells. The fullness of the Godhead in Him is manifested. He is the personification of the perfect God.

By God all things were created. While we may not comprehend it, He created all things for a purpose. He was before all things and by Him all things are held together. Notice this:

1. Creative Act was 'by Him'
2. Creative End was "for Him"

Revelation 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Hebrews 1:10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

Verses 18 and 19 speak of the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ. He is the head of the church. The church was created to bring honor and glory to Christ forever, and the church is God's spiritual representative on earth.

Ephesians 2:21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

Jesus is the first in the resurrection.

Matthexw 28:1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. 2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 5 And the angel answered and said unto the

women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

1 Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Jesus truly is first in all things. Is he first in your life? If not, you need to change your priorities. He should be the first priority in every one's life. God caused all fulness to dwell in the son.

IV. The Reconciling Work of Christ

Col 1:20 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Col 1:21 And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

The Apostle now shifts his focus. Whereas the recent focal point has been the person of Jesus Christ, the thought now turns again to His work. Specifically, the focus becomes the reconciling work of Christ. The text makes it clear that Jesus Christ has "made peace through the blood of his cross." As he had afore described in Romans 5:1, we now have peace with God as a result of faith in Christ. Here, the agency of that peace is clear: the shed blood of Jesus Christ. It has become the basis for our reconciliation to God.

The precept of reconciliation is full of implications. Mankind once was in harmony and fellowship with God. However, sin ruptured that fellowship and relationship. Only by the shed blood of Christ can our relationship with God be restored. In so doing, we have been reconciled back to a harmonious relationship and fellowship to Himself and the Father. The agent making this possible is His shed blood. He further notes this reconciliation to be of "things in earth, or things in heaven."

What is evidently implied is not only our reconciliation, but that also of the entire creation which was corrupted through the entrance of sin. (See Romans 8:22.) All has been reconciled through the efficacy of His shed blood.

Rom 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

In verse 21, Paul notes that we were those that were sometime alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works. The word translated as sometime (pote pote) has the sense of 'formerly' or 'in the past.' The truth is, the sinful deeds of our past alienated us from God. That sin even made us hostile to God in our very

minds. Sin alienates and poisons. Yet, praise God, Jesus Christ has reconciled us back to God through His shed blood.

The world cries out for peace, but there is no peace like the peace the soul receives when we turn to Jesus Christ for salvation. He brought all things under subjection when He died on that cross, and nothing can be held against us. All things have been reconciled by Jesus to God. He is our great mediator that stands between Satan and God. When the evil accuser comes and brings a railing accusation against us, Jesus is there to take up for us. In verse 21 Paul tells them that Jesus has reconciled the alienated and enemies in your mind by evil works. Only Jesus can reconcile us and bring us Holy unto God.

I thought J. Vernon McGee's comments were good on verse 21.

God did not wait until we promised to scrub our faces, put on our Sunday clothes, and go to Sunday school before He agreed to do this work of reconciliation. It was while you and I were in rebellion against Him, while we were doing wicked works, that He reconciled us to Himself. No man can say, "I'm lost because God has not made adequate provision for me." A man is lost because he wants to be lost, because he is in rebellion against God.

"That were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind." This reminds us that there is a *mental* alienation from God as well as a moral alienation. A great many people think that men are lost because they have committed some terrible sin. The reason people are lost is that their minds are alienated from God. I think this explains the fierce antagonism toward God on the part of the so-called intellectuals of our day. There is an open hatred and hostility toward God.

Some time ago I had the funeral of a certain movie star out here in California. The Hollywood crowd came to the funeral. One of the television newscasters commented on the funeral, and I appreciated what he had to say about it. He said, "Today Hollywood heard something that it had never heard before." But I also saw something there at that funeral that I had never seen before. I had never seen so much hatred in the eyes of men and women as I saw when I attempted to present Jesus Christ and to explain how wonderful He is and how He wants to save people. There is an alienation in the mind and heart of man.

Col 1:22 In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

Col 1:23 If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister;

Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross resulted from His shed blood again becoming the agency whereby we have been reconciled. The purpose thereof was to

present us “holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight.” What a three fold goal!

His reconciling work has as its object that we might be (1) holy before God, (i.e., pure); (2) unblameable—in His sight; and (3) unreprouable. The word translated as unblameable (amwmov amomos) has the sense of being without blemish or spot.

The word translated as unreprouable (anegklhtov aneglektos) has the sense of ‘without cause for censure or criticism.’ These are the goals for which we have been reconciled to God.

In verse 23, Paul gives further qualifications for obtaining these objectives. They are, “if ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” The ultimate goals of being holy, unblameable, and unreprouable are further linked to being faithful—continuing in the faith. Added to that is the thought of being grounded spiritually. It has the idea of being ‘spiritually rooted.’

The word translated as settled (‘edraiov hedraios) has the sense of ‘immoveable’ or ‘steadfast.’ Perseverance might be in view. Being not moved away from the hope of the gospel likely has the thought of not becoming discouraged in the Christian life. Paul’s admonition to obtain the threefold goals of holiness, being unblameable, and unreprouable are ultimately linked to being faithful, being spiritually rooted and steadfast, and not being discouraged in our Christian walk.

He continues by noting that they indeed heard the gospel which was preached to every creature under heaven. Paul tacitly admitted fulfilling the Great Commission as noted in Mark 16:15. To that end, he had been made a minister.

V. The Mystery of the Indwelling Christ

Col 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church:

Col 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

Col 1:26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

Paul adds several personal comments. He notes in the third person that he now rejoiced in his sufferings for them. Spiritual maturity clearly is in view. Though he faced great adversity, nevertheless, he rejoiced therein because it was on behalf of young churches such as the one at Colosse. Recall that he sat in Rome, under arrest, as he penned these words.

In a phrase difficult to understand, Paul continued to the effect: he was paying that which was lacking in the afflictions of Christ for them—the body of Christ. He was suffering so that they would not have to. He made clear in that regard that they as a local church were the body of Christ. Paul had been made a minister—“to fulfill the word of God.” Moreover, that ministry had been given to him by the dispensation of God on their behalf and for them. His fulfilling of the Word of God was ultimately for the benefit of young churches such as the Colossian church.

Paul continued noting how the gospel regarding the church was the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints. The word translated as mystery (musthron mustherion) has the sense, ‘that which heretofore had not been revealed.’

As will be described in the following verse, that mystery is how the Word and work of God would be to gentiles. That truth was not well understood in the Old Testament (though it was there). The significant element of Jewish believers in the early church had substantial difficulty with the notion of the gospel being for the gentile as well as Jew. Yet that truth was in the process of being made manifest to God’s people then and there.

This mystery has been hid from ages and generations in the past. But during Paul’s day, the mystery was made known to the saints. And that mystery was that Christ came and died not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. I dare say the majority of the people who hear this or read this study will be non-Jews, meaning you are a Gentile.

We live in a period today known as the ‘Age of the Gentiles.’ During this church age, we have been given a special blessing to have our eyes opened to the truth of Jesus Christ. Most Jews today still are blinded to the truth of Jesus Christ. But the day is soon coming when God brings salvation back to the Jews during the time of the tribulation. We should make it clear that any man, woman, boy, or girl, can be saved by turning to Christ. But those Jews saved during this period are like Paul who said he was born out of due time.

1 Cor 15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

1 Cor 15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

1 Cor 15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

1 Cor 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Col 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this

*mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:
Col 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all
wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:
Col 1:29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which
worketh in me mightily.*

Specifically, the mystery was how that God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Clearly implied is that there are great riches in His glory. The hope of that glory is rooted in Christ in us. He is our hope of glory. The word hope, both in English and Greek, has the sense of an expectation of something good. Glory refers not only to His personal radiance, but also figuratively to where He dwells (i.e., heaven).

In the context at hand, that glory is also found spiritually in the church. The mystery to the Jewish mind was how that gentiles could be included in that glory. The very object of Paul's preaching was none other than Jesus Christ. He was the One whom they preached, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom." Paul sought to warn and teach every man. His witnessing was all inclusive. He witnessed to both small and great in whatever circumstance.

A lesson remains for us to not only be universal in our witnessing, but to do so with all wisdom. His ultimate goal was to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The word translated as perfect (teleiov teleios) has the sense of 'complete' in the degree nothing is lacking. It thus is perfected. The greater scope of our witness is therefore at hand. Not only are we commissioned to win people to Christ, but then to go on and disciple them to the point they are complete in Christ Jesus.

The greater thought is of ultimate spiritual maturity. Though God's work indeed is a battle, His help is always at hand to empower us for the task.

Because God originally chose Israel as his 'people' to spread His word, the Jews thought that God was partial to them and reserved salvation only to them. But we have the record of many Gentiles being saved, even during the Old Testament time period. Rachel the harlot is a good example. Paul preached not only to the Jews, but to ALL men. And because of this, God worked mightily through Paul.

Romans 1:14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. 15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

Ephesians 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Eph 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.